Mr. Speaker, when the original resolution

that brought our military to intervention in Iraq came to the Congress,

I interpreted it as asking the Congress to turn over to the President

our military to use anytime he wished, anywhere he wished, against any

country he wished, now and forever more.

Feeling that this was patently unconstitutional, I was very pleased

when the International Relations Committee, chaired at that time by

Henry Hyde, revised the resolution and narrowly focused it on Iraq.

That resolution had strong encouragement for the President to obtain a

U.N. resolution so that when we went into Iraq it would be a part of a

U.N. coalition. The U.N. would own that war; we wouldn't own it.

When the President did not get the U.N. resolution so strongly

encouraged by that original resolution that we voted on, I then voted

for the Spratt substitute because I felt that if we were going to send

our young men and women into war, that it needed to be with the full

support of the American people through their elected officials, and we

needed to have that additional debate. That didn't happen. I felt that

we went in with unrealistic expectations.

There is no country around Iraq that has anything like the government

that we would like for them to have. Several of the countries have

dictatorships. We call them royal families. Saudi Arabia, the Arab

Emirates, Kuwait, but they are dictatorships. Several countries, Jordan

and Syria, have kings. Iran is essentially a theocracy ruled by the

mullahs. The only country that comes even close is the vestiges of the

Ottoman Empire, Turkey, where they have a sort of democracy, but

several times in the last few years the military has thrown out the

civilian government, telling them they need to start over, hardly the

kind of government that we have in this country and that we envision

for Iraq.

So I thought that there were very unrealistic expectations. That was

a very steep hill to climb; that success was unlikely, and therefore, I

wanted to go in under a U.N. resolution.

What now? I hope I am wrong, but I believe that there will be one of

two

likely outcomes, either another strong man, hopefully more benevolent,

than Saddam Hussein, or three loosely federated states with an

overarching entity that pumps the oil and distributes the revenues on a

per capita basis.

Now, we have a resolution before us and how should one vote? If you

believe that the President is the Commander in Chief and has a right to

pursue the war in the way he chooses, then you would vote ``no'' on

this resolution.

If you believe that this resolution sends the wrong message to the

enemy that we are losing our resolution, our resolve, then you would

vote ``no.''

If you believe this sends the wrong message to the troops, I know the

first clause says we support our troops, but then one might argue that

the right hand is taking away what the left hand gave because in the

second clause we say that we do not support the surge, which some may

interpret as not supporting our troops; then you would vote ``no.''

But if you believe that the Iraqis need to stand up so that we can

stand down, then you would vote ``yes.''

If you believe that the surge will not help, which is very likely,

then I think you need to vote ``yes.''

If you believe the surge might actually hurt by placing more of our

brave young men and women in harm's way, I understand that a fair

percentage of the violence over there is directed against us, if that

is true, then how do we reduce the violence by putting more of us

there, then you would vote ``yes.''

If you want to send a message to the President, the Congress and the

American people, that this war can't go on forever, then you would vote

``yes.''

If you want to send a message to the troops that we are watching,

that you won't be there forever, that you have the support of your

citizens and your Congress, then you would vote ``yes.''

This is obviously a very complex vote. Whether you vote ``yes'' or

whether you vote ``no,'' there will be unintended, unwanted messages

that will be sent. Being required to vote either ``yes'' or ``no'' on a

resolution like this is a little bit like requiring the husband to

answer the question, ``yes'' or ``no,'' ``Have you stopped beating your

wife?''

If that is true, then perhaps the best vote on this is a ``present''

vote.

It is so true here that what you see depends on where you stand.

There has been a lot of quite intemperate rhetoric on both sides. It is

hard sometimes to imagine that we are debating the same resolution.

It is so true here that he who frames the question determines the

answer.

Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't be here. After the debate, this vote is

somewhat irrelevant. Indeed, the listening Americans have each cast

their own vote. In spite of all the divisive rhetoric, I want one thing

to be certain, that all 435 of us want only what is best for America,

what is best for our troops, a good and bright future for the Iraqis

and especially want to assure our brave young men and women there that

they have the total thanks of a grateful Nation.